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# Will Israel restore security to the north?

*If Hezbollah mounts a significant attack, Israel should declare war and establish a fully demilitarized zone between the border and the Litani River.*

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After multiple **reports** that Iran and Hezbollah will strike Israel in a matter of hours or days, the White House, the Kremlin and other regional actors are working overtime to convince Tehran and its proxies to stand down.

But for Israel, this may be the moment to deliver a decisive blow to its adversaries that will restore security and prosperity to the citizens of Israel's north. The United States must make clear that it will support any Israeli counteroffensive.

Since the Iran-backed Hamas terror group launched its war with Israel last year, Jerusalem has focused its efforts on fighting in Gaza and maintained a mostly defensive posture on its northern border. That changed last month when the Iran-backed terror group Hezbollah killed 12 Druze children on a soccer field and Israel responded forcefully, killing two senior terror figures in Beirut and Tehran. Now there is a pregnant pause as the Iranian axis decides how to respond.

The White House is pushing all sides to stand down as Washington shepherds yet another round of hostage negotiations between Israel and Hamas. The Biden administration believes that if it can get a hostage deal and end the war in Gaza, Hezbollah will stop attacking Israel, bringing calm to the region at least until the November elections in the U.S.

As the world waits to see if Iran and its regional subsidiaries will cave to international pressure and stand down or instead choose to take the region into a sharp escalation, a maelstrom of rumors and disinformation is swirling.

According to Aug. 11 **reports**, Iran planned to hold its fire long enough for hostage negotiations scheduled for Aug. 15 to take place. However, more recent **reporting** speculates that Iran plans to strike Israel imminently, irrespective of the negotiations.

Similar conflicting **reports** continue to swirl regarding Hezbollah's plans to attack Israel.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has moved **significant** firepower to the region in an attempt to deter military escalation, including an additional carrier strike group carrying F-35s and a guided missile submarine **announced** by DOD on Aug. 12.

But even if Iran and its axis bow to international pressure and hold their fire long enough for Washington to conclude a deal that ends the war in Gaza, brings the hostages home and spurs Hezbollah to announce a ceasefire, Israel will not have lasting security in the north.

Hezbollah, after all, will still maintain an arsenal of 150,000 rockets and missiles near Israel's border that it can unleash against its neighbor at any moment. Israel's northern communities will remain vulnerable to attacks from terrorists that infiltrate the border.

Hezbollah began targeting the Jewish state with rockets and other projectiles on Oct. 8, pummeling Israeli homes, farms and businesses. In an unprecedented move, Jerusalem ordered the **evacuation** of 43 northern Israeli communities along the Lebanese border, leaving approximately 80,000 Israelis internally displaced. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken **admitted** that Israel had "lost sovereignty" of its northern border region.

Despite the evacuations, Hezbollah rockets and drones have killed **dozens** of Israelis who remained. The Jewish state has conducted limited airstrikes in response to Hezbollah attacks, but neither side has unleashed its full potential yet. Israel has not even officially declared war on its northern border. Instead, the Jewish state has devoted the bulk of its attention to defeating Hamas in Gaza.

Even if the U.S. succeeds in brokering a deal with Hamas that delivers a ceasefire with Hezbollah, Israelis will not return to their homes in the north unless there is a credible buffer zone between the Israeli communities and the Hezbollah terrorists that have de facto rule of southern Lebanon.

After witnessing Hamas rape, slaughter and abduct their countrymen on Oct. 7, Israelis are understandably reluctant to live a stone's throw away from another, even more capable Islamist terror organization.

Only a major blow to Hezbollah that pushes the terror organization away from Israel's border will restore security to Israel's northern communities—a prerequisite for Israeli families to return.

As long as there is any hope—however slim—of bringing home the hostages from Gaza, the Jewish state must pursue negotiations with Hamas.

If the international community can restrain Iran and its axis long enough to conclude a deal that brings the hostages home and delivers some quiet to Israel's northern communities, the north will likely remain neglected and underpopulated while the threat of Hezbollah looms. That is a sacrifice that Israelis can probably live with for a while.

However, if Hezbollah mounts a significant attack on Israel in the coming days, then Israel should declare war on the group and take the military steps necessary to establish a fully demilitarized zone between Israel's border and the Litani River, as called for in United Nations Security Council Resolution **1701**.

If Israel chooses this path and goes on the offensive, Washington must support it. Only by restraining Hezbollah and returning Israeli sovereignty to the north can Israel guarantee the security it seeks and deserves.

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